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NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS

IN CHARGE OF

ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

NITROUS OXID-OXYGEN IN LABOR.—A paper in the *American Journal of Obstetrics* sums up the advantages of the use of nitrous oxid-oxygen in labor. The entire second stage is practically painless. There is no exhaustion. The post-partum psychoses are greatly lessened. The soft parts, especially the perineum, are less often lacerated. Healthy babies are delivered. Involution is prompt. The function of the breasts is not disturbed. The patient usually takes the gas readily. The uterine contractions push the head into and through the pelvis, and it is born without much pain. The labor is normal.

ARTIFICIALLY FED INFANTS.—The *Journal of the American Medical Association*, in a synopsis of an article in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, says that every baby is a law unto himself in capacity, digestive power and assimilative process. Psychic and material individuality are as characteristic of infancy as of adult life. General guiding principles are essential, but no rigid, hard and fast rules can be laid down to fit every case, for the baby is a living entity and not a machine with standardized parts. One must study, examine and handle each baby personally if success is to be attained.

REFLEX COUGH FROM IMPACTED CERUMEN.—A Cuban medical journal reports a case of a spasmodic cough in a young child, resembling whooping cough, for which there was no apparent cause. It ceased upon the removal of an excess of wax in one ear.

IMPROVED TOURNIQUET.—During the war a metal tourniquet of unusual design was found in one of the captured German advanced post surgical hospitals. It was on the principle of a clamp, the arms of rounded steel covered with rubber tubing. An American surgeon modified it and had it made in Boston. The two arms cross at the tip and are rounded to fit the limb; there is a strongly made joint where they cross and the handles are given a direction which brings them nearly parallel when the instrument is applied. An oblong slot in the middle of one handle admits the adjustment screw, which may be shifted to adjust the compression.

PUBLIC HEALTH.—It is stated in a paper in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* that wherever there is a properly organized and vigorous public health service, smallpox, typhoid fever, yellow fever and malaria are now negligible causes of mortality.

The achievement in diphtheria has been in the direction of the cure, not in the prevention of the disease. The decrease in the cases of pulmonary tuberculosis is not so marked. Phthisis and pneumonias alone account for rather more than a quarter of all deaths organologically classified.

WOOD ALCOHOL.—Much attention has been drawn to wood alcohol from the number of fatalities that have followed its use as a beverage. The *Illinois Health News* says it is obtained chiefly from the distinctive distillation of wood,—birch, beech, maple, oak, elm and alder being most frequently used. Wood alcohol is used for denaturing grain alcohol, as a solvent in the preparation of shellac, varnish, dyes, etc., as an ingredient in medical and pharmaceutical preparations; in the chemical industries, and as a fuel and illuminant. Formerly it was a dark, bad smelling, bad tasting fluid, which no one was tempted to drink. Later a process was developed by which this color, smell and taste were removed, making its substitution easy by unscrupulous persons.

ALOE AS A PURGATIVE.—The *Journal of the American Medical Association* says that if a purgative pill is needed, a sufficient dose of aloes is all that is necessary. The dose required is small, it is reliable, and does not lose its efficiency on prolonged use. The odor is disagreeable and the taste extremely bitter, so it cannot be used in liquid form. It acts chiefly on the colon and if taken by a nursing mother may act as a purgative on the child.

THE BEGINNING OF VACCINATION.—About 150 years ago Edward Jenner, the son of a Gloucestershire clergyman, was told by a milk maid near his home that one could not have smallpox after having had cowpox. He was not even a medical student at this time. Later he studied medicine and lived for two years in the house of John Hunter, the famous London surgeon. He tried in vain to rouse Hunter's interest in the facts he had been told. Dr. Jenner finally devised the method of vaccination which made actual contact between the cow and the patient unnecessary.

VACCINATION WITHOUT SCAR.—Major Goodall, of the Canadian Army, has been experimenting with vaccination by hypodermic injection of the virus. There is no open wound requiring dressings, and subject to infection. It is effective in a large number of cases; it is easily administered to children, and the local and systemic reactions are comparatively mild. It is still to be settled whether it produces immunity, and if so, if it is permanent.